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ABSTRACT

The "Texas Monthly," a one and a half year old magazine begun in February 1973, provides upper income readers with both booster and critical content. In its first year, the magazine moved from 10,000 circulation to 60,000, from six to thirty-five pages of ads, and from a staff of six to twenty-one. Nearly half of its readers are in the $20,000 and up income bracket and have college degrees or training, and a large majority hold influential decision-making positions, especially in finance and investment. In addition to content on sports, travel, the outdoors, music, films, books, museums, exhibits, food and nutrition, business, fashion, and entertainment, "Texas Monthly" offers reporting on such topics as the state Highway Establishment, land sales schemes, abortion, sex, lobbying, religious radio, Jesus freaks and freak doctors, law firms, and news media. Response to the magazine has generally been favorable; however, some early objections were raised by those who object to profane language in print. The advertisements did gain readers. The success of "Texas Monthly" offers clues that magazines are not dead but are thriving in new forms. (SW)

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A NEW STATE "CITY MAGAZINE": A REPORT ON TEXAS MONTHLY
Winner of the National Magazine Award for Specialized Journalism

by
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for
Magazine Division
Association for Education in Journalism
San Diego State University
August 19, 1974

A local barometer of the continuing growth and success of specialized magazine journalism is indicated by the 1½-year-old Texas Monthly, which provides upper income readers with both booster and critical content, which capitalizes on strong state civic identity, good state roads and commuter airlines, and which unites traditional city magazine practices with elements of the new urban journalism, consumer protection, and urban survival advice.

In its first year, the magazine moved from 10,000 circulation to 60,000, from 6 to 35 pages of ads, and from a staff of 6 to 21, since it first appeared in February 1973. Nearly half of its mobile and involved readers are in the $20,000 and up income bracket, and have college degrees or training, and a large majority hold influential decision-making positions, especially in high-level financial and investment circles.

Many readers live outside the urbanized strip city areas, but can find access to the civic bulletin board offerings in the major Texas cities highlighted: Dallas-Forth Worth, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, and Austin, where it is published.

In addition to content on sports, travel, outdoors, music, films, books, museums, exhibits, food and nutrition, business, fashion, and entertainment, Texas Monthly (for 1) offers fearless reporting on sacred cows such as: the state Highway Establishment, land sales schemes, abortion, sex, lobbying, religious radio, Jesus freaks and freak doctors, "redneck hip" music, ugly architecture, junkie cops, co-ed prisons, respectable hired killers, plastic progress and environmental rape, and deep probes of chiropractors, massage parlors, health spas, big banks, law firms and news media.

The crusading magazine also offers the usual strong dose of civic superlatives, self-conscious state pride, but in balance does not hesitate to investigate topics the dailies may not touch, and reaches beyond individual inter-city jealousy to the region and nation. Its approach is often unorthodox, not hide-bound(personnel without magazine experience and a promotion director hired after it succeeded); and the magazine shares news of itself and displays a growing array of Texas journalists.

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While general mass circulation magazines have declined, Texas Monthly has prospered as a breed of "city magazine" in a state with large rural hinterland, but highly urbanized by strip and twin cities connected by superhighways and strong state unity and sense of purpose. Ironically, and perhaps properly, the new magazine is housed in the same building as was the old, now defunct, Texas Star, the last state, mass circulation Sunday supplement which folded in 1973. The Monthly is also a few blocks from the Texas Observer, an older liberal, political journal in Austin, now the state's locale for numerous free lance writers, their publications, and magazines of state-based associations.

PERSONNEL, POLICY AND APPROACHES: Originally the magazine had a staff of five, but a year later, it was up to 21. Staff members are mostly under 30 and lack magazine experience. Publisher Michael Levy studied finance and law and worked for Philadelphia Magazine. Editor William Broyles was assistant to the superintendent of the Houston public schools. Managing Editor Lyn Van Dusen came from the Houston Post, where she wrote and edited special sections. Associate Editor Richard West was press secretary to the lieutenant governor and senior editor Griffin Smith Jr., served as counsel to the state legialature on no-fault insurance, taxation and drug regulation, and like Senior Editor Gregory Curtis, has written for various magazines. On the business side, the experience of the advertising, circulation, production, promotion and art personnel has been primarily in public relations, and work not directly related to magazine production.

As for the aim of Texas Monthly, Publisher Levy wrote in the first issue that "We're not competing with the vapid Sunday supplements with bluebonnets on their covers, with the promotional magazines with their prostitutional story-for-an-ad format, or with the chamber of commerce magazines with their Babbitt perspectives. We are competing with the national magazines for both readers and advertising." He has further elaborated: ". . .we are not a Houston Chronicle, a Dallas Morning News or a Texas Observer. We're not liberal, conservative, Democratic or Republican. . . . .What we are sick of is the quickness of some of the Texas press to rely on bluebonnet pictorials and other similarly hard-hitting efforts in journalism. Stories on bluebonnets, kittens and octogenarians generally don't offend too many readers or, more importantly advertisers. Nice bland pages of pap and puff, the kind that was big in 1930 and which some of the Texas press and senile journalism professors still laud as great journalism."

Editor Broyles explains that failure of the regular media influenced the decision to start the magazine. "If our readers have ever finished the daily paper or the six o'clock news and felt there was more than what they were being told, then they know why we started Texas Monthly. We designed it as an intelligent, entertaining and useful publication for Texans whose culture, sophistication and interests are largely unrecognized and unserved by existing media," he wrote in an early issue.

Broyles said "We serve no vested interests, protect no sacred cows, and measure each subject by the same high standards." He said the magazine aims to explain Texas institutions and environment and how they got that way. He said the monthly would "explore in depth prominent men, women and institutions, (and) we will also be sensitive to men and women not in the headlines. . ." The magazine aims to "rescue business from the business pages", "face the issues of crime", discuss spectator and other sports fully, take Texas culture seriously, and, in Broyles's words "We will shy from nothing but will be guided by our own good taste and best sense of what is important and of interest to our readers."

The magazine is seen as an aid in "self-identification for Texas", said Broyles, who notes that "People feel a sense of community with other Texans unlike any other state." He eventually sees the magazine expanding into a regional publication. Broyles points out that Texas "is not only a state of the Union, but a state of mind", and he notes that it is easy and fashionable to write about Texas as big and brassy, but his magazine takes the state seriously.

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CONTENT AND FORMAT:

Issue:	No. Pages:	Cover Story:	No. Major Features:
February 1973	84	SPORTS: Don Meredith on TV	4
March 1973	84	RELIGION: Border radio stations	4
April 1973	84	FOOD: Texas barbecue	4
May 1973	100	MEDICINE: New freak doctors	5
June 1973	88	ENTERTAINMENT: Summer activity	4
July 1973	88	POLITICS: lobbying, legislators	5
August 1973	96	CRIME: Drug wars in South Texas	5
September 1973	96	POLITICS: John Connally	7
October 1973	102	CRIME: Closing of brothel	5
November 1973	112	SPORTS: Dallas Cowboys' coach	5
December 1973	110	CRIME: Hired killers	5
January 1974	104	HEALTH: Women's spas	6
February 1974	112	ENTERTAINMENT: "Bum steer" awards	5
March 1974	112	CRIME: Co-ed prisons	4
April 1974	128	POLITICS: Texans head 2 parties	4
May 1974	128	FINANCE: big banks	5
June 1974	132	PRESS: Texas newspapers	4
July 1974	136	FASHION: Summer dress	5
August 1974	136	WORK: The "Redneck"	6
Issues: 19	2,032 pages (av. 107)		102

Focus of Cover Stories:
CRIME: 4
POLITICS: 3
SPORTS: 2
ENTER-TAINMENT: 2
WORK, FINANCE, FOOD, RELIGION, MEDICINE: 1 each
PRESS, FASHION, HEALTH

Feature Stories: (total): 91)

Crime:	10	Fashion:	6	Comsumers:	5	Ecology, Health,	
Sports:	9	Transport:	6	Business:	4	Religion: 3 each	
Media:	9	Entertain:	6	Film, Theater		Food, Work, Archi-	
Politics:	7	History:	6	Art, Music:	4	tecture, Homes: 2 ea.	
						Law, Hobbies: 1 each	

Departments: Stories: (total: 95)			
Business/Investment:	16	Past History:	4
Eating/Dining:	16	Politics:	3
Arts, Music:	15	Sports:	3
Film:	14	Books/Records:	3
Children/Family:	8	Shopping:	2
Travel and Transit:	7	Leisure, Pets:	2
Food/Nutrition:	4	Schools:	1

Grand Total Feature Stories: 180

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The magazine also includes a section on "Miscellany" which includes: "Around The State, an entertainment guide; "Roar of the Crowd", letters to the editor; "From the Publisher" and "Behind the Lines", comments of the management and background to stories and writers; "Briar Patch" and "Loose Leaf", news tid bits; "Touts", ideas on what to do, see or buy for the month; "TM Reporter", names in the news; and "Contest", prizes for reader submission of humourous or satirical words and phrases.

URBAN TOPICS HIGHLIGHT MAGAZINE CONTENT:

Daring urban writing is the hallmark of the Texas Monthly, which offers critical, in-depth, evaluative analyses of many sacred cows not often discussed in the daily press. The magazine makes liberal use of first-hand, participant observer stories, and free lance material(20-30 per cent). In its first year, the magazine received more than 3,000 manuscripts from all over the U.S. and from foreign countries, plus letters suggesting stories or requesting assignments. The magazine, which pays $250. per article, published seven of the more than 3,000. Half of the writers whose work has appeared are amateurs(professors, housewives, attorneys, an urban planner, an investment consultant, a stock broker, a cop, yard man, and ex-CIA operator, for examples). Most of the contributors are housewives, and 25 of the writers whose work has appeared have published books.

The Monthly has dealt with the superlative--from places to eat barbecue and chicken fried steak, to the best and worst legislators and the auto races. It has told readers how to buy clothes, a condiminium or a bike and how to pick a vet or watch birds. It has probed the inside of nude theater, poker and strip tease, Jesus freaks and witches. It is rich in content about Texas: the Space Program, top places for Tex-Mex food, toys of famous Texans, Neiman Marcus and Dallas fashion, paintings in Cowtown-Fort Worth, Astrodome events in Houston, rodeos in Texas; and names surrounding Texas legend: the deaths of LBJ and the "Marlboro Man", John Connally, Mrs. Oswald ("Mother of the Decade"), Jack Valenti, Ross Perot, Tom Landry--and Dr. Pepper!

For a March 1974 article on "Abortion in Texas", writer Martha Hume spent three months interviewing doctors, women, social workers, and others, to write "the first comprehensive examination of the status of abortions since the United States Supreme Court atruck down Texas's anti-abortion statute a year ago."

The magazine uses the changing local urban scene to highlight the process of urbanization like the new rural-urban music called "redneck hip" common in Austin, the inner city changes in Houston's Montrose neighborhood, and the swallowing up of Arlington, Texas, by the plastic and progress of expanding Dallas-Fort Worth.

In the areas of architecture, transportation, urban crime and land use and environment, the Texas Monnthly has"raised cane" in the "urban pastures" of the once-rural state. Architectural designer James Stanley Walker in January and June 1974 issues critiqued Texas buildings---good and bad--in a state where civic boosterism is home-grown. Free lancer Herbert Molloy Mason Jr., in April 1973 told how environmentalists, engineers and the press were involved in "The Second Battle of San Antonio", an expressway route fight. And the most sacred of Texas cows, in the opinion of many, the highways, were examined by writer Griffin Smith Jr., in April 1974, in "The Highway Establishment and How It Grew". The long article was written in the context of the energy crisis, urban mass transit needs, other pressing state priorities, and the power elite and country clubs associated with the Texas Good Roads Association. (It must be said that the Monthly found itself a booster of the new Dallas-Fort Worth airport as "a real step forward; the biggest, the best planned, the most flexible, and by default, the most environmental conscious airport in the world".) Subsequent writers thought differently, as some of the initial boosterism proved to be exaggerated.

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To expose get-rich-quick land schemes, free lancer Pat Reed of Dallas became a land salesperson and buyer to unearth information on "Should You Buy This Land?", which was published in the magazine. Al Reinert wrote on how politicians, lumber companies and Time Inc. are involved in "The Big Thicket Tangle", an East Texas "biological Noah's Ark" which forest ecologists and others are trying to save for a national park. When the U.S. Navy sought to build its communications Project Sanguine in the Texas Hill Country, Grover Ellis wrote that "Dr. Strangelove is Back" and the project was stopped. In other environmental articles, Dallas Morning News writers Dave McNeeley and Lyke Thompson used the magazine's pages to tell all about "The Unholy Trinity Incident" in June 1973. They told how a combination of environmentalists and political activists stopped Dallas's plans for a seaport (like Houston's), although, "The canal backers put together an advertising and promotion show reminiscent of bringing a new cigaret on the market."

Perhaps the best examples of courageous reporting in the area of crime and law enforcement are the following: Writer Gary Cartright wrote of "Cops as Junkies" and John Moore and Reed Holland (pseudonyms) risked the inside dangers of collecting information on "The Laredo-San Antonio Heroin War", and warned that "Chamber of Commerce poets" should look at the "guns and needles of America's potential black-market drug capital."

Reporter bravery was also shown by Al Reinert in his December 1973 story on hired killers, one of whom he contracted to meet in a hotel room for an interview. The "hit man", he found "looked like a dentist" andthe story reported that such "free enterprise" killers are "ordinary, church-going, good citizens, family men, products of our educational system and our society, settled into suburban homes with mortgages to pay and lawns to water and keep trimmed."

RESPONSE AND FEEDBACK:

Response to the magazine has generally been favorable, considering its treatment of controversial topics. Some early objections were raised by those who like Texas bluebonnets and object to profane language in print. Some El Paso area readers objected to its exclusion, due in part to its distance and different time zone. Small town and rural readers responded to the urban-style magazine, somewhat contrary to the expectation of the management, which at the last minute had changed the magazine name from Texas Cities to Texas Monthly.

One of the strongest responses came to the naming of the best barbecue places in Texas and to the listing of restaurants, which did not help the advertising budget but did gain readers. The magazine reported that those listings and the writing and the pictures have drawn in the bulk of income, since as Levy points out: "The reader, not the advertiser, is now carrying the load. They (the advertisers) want to reach the man who will pay $1 a copy, because they know the person who pays $1 for a magazine will read it." The Monthly sales are based on 80% subscribers and 20% newstands.

The magazine's "Roar of the Crowd" section contains letters from readers, often legislators, politicians, doctors, professors, chairman of boards,writers, editors, businessmen and civic activists. Some of the women readers have objected at times to male-dominated content and approach, and the Ten Worst Legislators were not happy with their designation, but Broyles consolation is the balance of having offended just about everybody. But advertisers have poured in. They include the usual cigaret and liquor ads, the more exquisite places to eat, shop and rest; FM stations, choice resorts and private schools and academies, those who sell expensive imports, carpets, tapestries, jewelry and leather, electric calculators, private jet service, private child care centers; galleries, architects, ecologists, photographers, publishers, and those who urge planned parenthood, to name a few.

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The crowning evidence of success, in the eyes of the magazine management, was the winning of the 1974 National Magazine Award for Specialized Journalism from the Columbia School of Journalism, which cited Texas Monthly as a "new, independent circulation state magazine for the entire body of its work during the year, which brought its readers news and service, features, exposes of problems and pressures, essays on interesting persons and places across a wide frontier." The award greatly appealed to the Monthly's sense of state pride and the prestige of being in the company of other winners in the East: Scientific American, Sports Illustrated, Newsweek and the New Yorker, put it into the "big leagues", so to speak in civic boosterism.

After the award was made in New York, Levy wrote that "our existence and growth as a new magazine is a very real product of the state of Texas and its cultural maturation." In its anniversary issue, the magazine reported that "Texas Monthly will be going to the major cities, the not-so-major ones, the small towns, the prairies, the cross-roads. . . . .any place in the state where anything is happening that will interest or affect our readers." That general kind of readership potential was indicated by the American Libraries magazine response in November 1973, when it said that "while the (Monthly) features are tied to Texas in some ways, they are usually broad enough in scope to warrant general interest."

READERSHIP:

A study of the Texas Monthly subscribers was completed in March 1974 by the Research and Counsel Marketing and Public Affairs firm of Belden Associates in Dallas. President Joe Belden reported that 500 interviews were conducted, 73 per cent with persons on the magazine mailing list and 27 per cent with other adult members of the households. Following are the results submitted to the magazine:

Socio-Economic Status: There is recurring evidence throughout the data that Texas Monthly subscribers are demographically among the top end of the population and a prime marketing target. Nearly half report incomes of $20,000 or more a year, and more than half are in the acquisitive period of life--between 25 and 49--when families are being formed and many are involved in what is going on around them. More than half are college graduates, or have done post-graduate work. Adding those who have completed some college work or are in college now, eight out of ten have an education above the high school level. For comparison purposes, Belden continues, the following table shows how Texas Monthly subscribers living in Texas compare with the state average:

	Subscribers:	Texas:
$15,000 or more annual household income . . .	62%	15%*
Four years of college or more	56%	11%**
Own one or more autos in family	98%	87%**

*1973 Sales Management
**1970 Census

Employment: A large majority of Texas Monthly subscribers hold influential decision-making positions, the report continues. In almost seven out of ten households, the chief wage earner is a professional, semi-professional, proprietor, manager, or other official. Four out of ten hold the title or position of chairman, president, vice-president, owner, partner, general manager, or other similar title. In terms of job functions, almost three in ten are engaged in sales or marketing, and two out of ten are responsible for policy-making decisions. About one in ten is involved in finance and a similar number is in advertising and distribution, the Belden report found.

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Investments and Finance: Affluence of Texas Monthly subscriber households is also demonstrated by a high level of investment and financial activity, as shown in the following tables:

Life insurance in force	89%
Home or property insurance	88%
Real estate considered an investment	76%
Corporate stock	56%
Certificates of deposit	44%
Savings bonds	43%
Mutual funds	31%
Corporate bonds	23%

Real Estate Owned other than own home:	
Undeveloped property	37%
Residential property	34%
Farmland or ranch	24%
Commercial property	20%
Condominium or townhouse	4%
Users of Credit:	
Gasoline credit card	88%
Dept. store charge card	85%
Bank credit card	73%
Travel or entertainment cd.	53%
Telephone credit card	44%

Auto Ownership: Virtually all subscribers own an automobile, and eight out of ten have two or more automobiles in their household.

Travel: Nine of ten Texas Monthly subscribers have taken trips, either for business or pleasure, to places in Texas during the past 12 months. The most frequently visited places are Austin (42%), Houston (40%), Dallas(38%) and San Antonio (38%. In addition to travel in Texas, seven out of ten have taken a trip outside the state in the past year. Three out of ten have a valid passport for travel outside the United States.

Leisure Time Activities: A large number of Texas Monthly subscribers spend their leisure time in activities which require expenditures for travel and lodging, as well as the equipment needed for participation:

Reading	96%
Listening to music	91%
Cooking	66%
Attending theater	62%
Visiting galleries/ museums	60%
Boating	42%
Hunting	32%
Playing tennis	30%
Golfing	21%
Snow skiing	13%

Texas Monthly subscribers frequently eat meals away from home. About nine out of ten dined out at a club or restaurant in the evening during the past month; among all subscriber households, the average was 5.1 times during the past month. More than eight out of ten have used or served alcoholicbeverages in their home during the past month.

In addition, Texas Monthly subscribers are highly involved in community and professional activities, the Belden Report found:

Church organization member	57%
Professional, business, or labor organization	54%
Community, civic, or service org.	47%
School organization	33%
Country club, golf, tennis clubs.	30%
Political organization.	28%

Reading Habits: Texas Monthly readers spend on an average of one and one-half hours reading a typical issue and refer to the issue an average of 3.3. times. Each copy delivered has an average of three readers, according to the respondents. "ine out of ten read the magazine in their homes.

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SIGNIFICANCE FOR JOURNALISM TEACHERS, JOURNALISTS AND MAGAZINE RESEARCH:

)The immediate future of magazines appears to be in the specialized magazine with a strong community and readership base, defined by city or state as geographic community or defined by subject interests as non-geographic community. The magazine which attempts to be all things to all people may not be any thing to any one.

)Controversial magazine content is acceptable to the elite, upper-income audience, whereas mass media must appeal to mass man and not offend any one. Those willing and able to pay for the content's production may be more receptive to controversy than those who pay little or nothing for the production of mass media content.

) Such special audience publications also appeal to those in power with decision-making potential--the "movers and the shakers". Material exposed to them can therefore be hard-hitting and not bland as in mass media. Such city magazines can therefore have an influence and impact far greater than their circulation indicates.

)Outspoken journalists--staff and free-lance--may find such magazines the best outlet for their work, and there are indications that there is far more story material than has ever been used. Such magazines offer the free lancer great opportunity.

)Magazine journalism teachers should use and observe the local "city" magazine for classroom learning and student manuscript sales. Often the personnel of such magazines are anxious to speak to students and to use them part-time. Teachers need not point only to national examples for good magazine journalism. The local community is a good laboratory.

)The gutty local issues of the day are appearing in such magazines and the local press is being supplements(and often "beat") by such journals. These magazines offer a history of the local community and perform a valuable service to the citizenry.

)The success of Texas Monthly is a testimony to the potential of a revived, local crusading journalism, and offers clues that magazines are not dead, but are thriving in new forms. It has shown itself to be responsive and involved with its readers, yet not afraid to offend if the journalistic truth is discovered. It has shown that civic boosterism is not necessarily an obstacle to telling the truth, but may actually make readers more receptive to that truth by mixing it with reassurance that the community or town is not bad simply because there is frequently some critical or adverse news to report.